

Summary of Recommendations

We conducted our audits in accordance with the *Auditor General Act* and the standards for assurance engagements as set out in the CPA Canada Handbook—Assurance.

This report contains five new and two repeated recommendations to government. The repeated recommendations have been made because we do not believe there has been sufficient action taken to implement our previous recommendations. We also confirm in this report that 12 prior recommendations have been implemented and eight are considered implemented due to changed circumstances.

As part of the audit process, we provide recommendations to government in documents called management letters. We use public reporting to bring recommendations to the attention of Members of the Legislative Assembly. For example, members of the all-party Standing Committee on Public Accounts refer to the recommendations in our public reports during their meetings with representatives of government departments and agencies.

The auditor general is the auditor of every ministry, department and regulated fund, and most provincial agencies. Under the *Government Organization Act*, ministers are responsible for administering departments and provincial legislation. Deputy ministers are delegated responsibility to support the minister in his or her role, and to act as the chief operator of a department. Ministers may also establish any boards, committees or councils they consider necessary to act in an advisory or administrative capacity for any matters under the minister's administration. A minister is responsible for oversight of the work and actions of the department and any provincial agencies under his or her administration. However, we make our recommendations to departments and provincial agencies rather than to the minister directly, given the delegated operational responsibilities and that they are in the best position to respond to and implement our recommendations. With respect to recommendations related to ministerial oversight of a provincial agency, we generally make the recommendation to the department supporting and providing advice to the minister.

We believe all of the recommendations in this report require a formal public response from the government. In instances where a recommendation has been made to a board-governed organization, we expect the organization to implement the recommendation and report back to its respective government ministry as part of proper oversight of the organization. By implementing our recommendations, the government will significantly improve the safety and welfare of Albertans, the security and use of the province's resources, or the oversight and ethics with which government operations are managed.

Reporting the Status of Recommendations

We follow up on all recommendations. The timing of our follow-up audits depends on the nature of our recommendations. To encourage timely implementation and assist with the planning of our follow-up audits, we require a reasonable implementation timeline on all recommendations accepted by the government or the entities we audit that report to the government. We recognize some recommendations will take longer to fully implement than others, but we encourage full implementation within three years. Typically, we do not report on the progress of an outstanding recommendation until management has had sufficient time to implement the recommendation and we have completed our follow-up audit work.

We repeat a recommendation if we find that the implementation progress has been insufficient.

We report the status of our recommendations as:

- **Implemented**—We explain how the government implemented the recommendation.
- **Repeated**—We explain why we are repeating the recommendation and what the government must still do to implement it.

On occasion, we may make the following comments:

- **Satisfactory progress**—We may state that progress is satisfactory based on the results of a follow-up audit.
- **Progress report**—Although the recommendation is not fully implemented, we provide information when we consider it useful for MLAs to understand management’s actions.

Performance Auditing—New Audits

Infrastructure—Government of Alberta Capital Planning

Page 20

RECOMMENDATION: Improve capital planning standards and phased approach to capital planning and approval

We recommend that the Department of Infrastructure improve its capital planning system by:

- updating its capital planning standards
- clarifying the capital planning phases and the planning deliverables required for each phase
- verifying if departments have completed the required planning for capital submissions and, if not, reporting this information to government committees

Consequences of not taking action

Government committees may base decisions for capital projects and programs on incomplete and inaccurate information. The committees may approve funding for projects before the project scope, cost and risks are adequately defined and understood, potentially resulting in capital projects that exceed cost or do not meet business needs.

Page 23

RECOMMENDATION: Improve maintenance planning systems

We recommend that the Department of Infrastructure:

- obtain information from departments on their maintenance needs and risks, and on the results they aim to achieve with the maintenance funding they request
- analyze the departments’ maintenance information and provide objective advice to government committees on maintenance funding

Consequences of not taking action

Government committees will not have adequate information on departments' maintenance needs, risks or results expected when making maintenance funding decisions. This lack of adequate information could cause poor service delivery, unnecessarily high operating and maintenance costs, and unnecessary risks to Albertans' health and safety.

Page 26

RECOMMENDATION: Evaluate capital maintenance programs for buildings

We recommend that the Department of Infrastructure work with affected departments to lead a review of the four capital maintenance programs for buildings and evaluate whether they are working well.

Consequences of not taking action

If a comprehensive review of the four similar programs is not completed, there will be no opportunity to benefit from the learnings, insights and efficiencies such a review would provide.

Performance Auditing—Follow-up Audits**Advanced Education—Collaborative Initiatives Among Post-secondary Institutions**

Page 37

RECOMMENDATION: Develop strategic plan and accountability framework —recommendation repeated

We again recommend that the Department of Advanced Education, working with institutions:

- develop and communicate a strategic plan that clearly defines the minister's expected outcomes for Campus Alberta, initiatives to achieve those outcomes, the resources required and sources of funding
- develop relevant performance measures and targets to assess if the outcomes are being achieved
- publicly report results and the costs associated with collaborative initiatives
- review and clarify the accountability structure for governing collaborative initiatives

Consequences of not taking action

Without a strategic plan and accountability framework, there is a high risk that the department will not achieve its collaborative initiative goals cost-effectively—or at all.

Page 40

RECOMMENDATION: Develop processes and guidance to plan, implement and govern collaborative projects—recommendation repeated

We again recommend that the Department of Advanced Education, working with institutions, develop systems and guidance for institutions to follow effective project management processes for collaborative initiatives.

Consequences of not taking action

Ineffective project management systems increase the risk that the department and institutions will not complete collaborative initiatives on time, on scope, within budget and with desired results.

Health—Primary Care Networks

Page 79

RECOMMENDATION: Evaluate PCN effectiveness

We recommend that the Department of Health, through its leadership role in the PCN Governance Structure, work with the PCNs and PCN physicians to:

- agree on appropriate targets for each PCN program performance measure, and require PCNs to measure and report results in relation to the targets
- develop a formal action plan for public reporting of PCN program performance

Consequences of not taking action

Without adequate systems to measure performance, the department cannot evaluate the results of the PCN program to make informed decisions on what is working well in the program and what needs to improve. The department will also lack the information needed to report to Albertans on the results achieved for the significant public investment in this program.

RECOMMENDATION: Informing Albertans about PCN services

We recommend that the Department of Health, through its leadership role in the PCN Governance Structure, work with PCNs and PCN physicians to:

- require PCN physicians to complete the established patient attachment process, and set appropriate timelines for completing this process
- agree on the best approaches for engaging Albertans as active participants in their own care and explaining the PCN services available to help them achieve their health goals

Consequences of not taking action

If patients are not engaged to understand who their family physician is, what services are available through their patient medical home and their PCN, and how they can access those services, there is significant risk that key benefits of the PCN program will not be fully realized. As one PCN told us, “patients themselves are the largest untapped resource in primary care.”